

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Regulatory Amendment 18 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Regulatory Amendment 18)** **May 2013**

#### **Why is Regulatory Amendment 18 needed?**

- Stock assessment updates for vermilion snapper and red porgy were recently completed.
- The vermilion snapper update indicated the stock is no longer undergoing overfishing (fish are being taken from the population too quickly) and is not overfished (there are not enough fish in the population).
- The stock assessment update for red porgy indicated the species is not undergoing overfishing but is still overfished.
- Based on the outcome of the stock assessment updates, several management measures for vermilion snapper and red porgy may be modified.

#### **What actions are contained in Regulatory Amendment 18?**

- The acceptable biological catch and the annual catch limit for vermilion snapper would increase. Currently the annual catch limit is 1,066,000 pounds whole weight. The annual catch limits for the next four years are illustrated in Table 1.

**Table. 1** New acceptable biological catch levels and annual catch limits for vermilion snapper for 2013-2016.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Acceptable Biological Catch Whole Weight</b>	<b>Total Annual Catch Limit Whole Weight</b>	<b>Commercial Annual Catch Limit Whole Weight</b>	<b>Recreational Annual Catch Limit Whole Weight</b>
2013	1,372,000	1,372,000	932,960	439,040
2014	1,312,000	1,312,000	892,160	419,840
2015	1,289,000	1,289,000	876,520	412,480
2016	1,269,000	1,269,000	862,920	406,080

- Reduce the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper from 1,500 pounds gutted weight to 1,000 pounds gutted weight, and when 75% of the commercial annual catch limit has been met or projected to be met, the commercial trip limit would be reduced to 500 pounds gutted weight.
- Remove the November 1 – March 31 recreational closed season for vermilion snapper.
- Reduce the annual catch limit for red porgy. **Table 2** contains the modified acceptable biological catch levels and annual catch limits for red porgy for the next six years.

**Table 2.** New acceptable biological catch levels, annual catch limits, and recreational annual catch targets for red porgy for 2013-2018.

Year	Acceptable Biological Catch Whole Weight	Total Annual Catch Level Whole Weight	Commercial Annual Catch Level Whole Weight	Recreational Annual Catch Level Whole Weight	Recreational Annual Catch Target Whole Weight
2013	306,000	306,000	153,000	153,000	109,670
2014	309,000	309,000	154,500	154,500	110,746
2015	328,000	328,000	164,000	164,000	117,555
2016	354,000	354,000	177,000	177,000	126,874
2017	379,000	379,000	189,500	189,500	135,834
2018	401,000	401,000	200,500	200,500	143,718

**Why is the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper being reduced?**

- Even though the annual catch limit is increasing for vermilion snapper, the rate of harvest is expected to result in early in-season closures for each of the two commercial split seasons.
- Reducing the trip limit would slow the rate of harvest and increase the probability that fishing opportunities can be extended further into each of the split seasons.

**Why is the annual catch limit for red porgy being reduced?**

- The new stock assessment update indicates that red porgy are still overfished.
- Even if all directed fishing of red porgy were to stop, the stock would not rebuild within its rebuilding schedule time frame, which ends in 2018.
- The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) has requested that a new benchmark stock assessment for red porgy be completed in 2014. Based on the outcome of the new benchmark assessment, the Council will re-visit the rebuilding strategy for red porgy.

**When can I comment on the actions in Amendment 9?**

- The public may comment on the proposed regulations for Regulatory Amendment 18 from May 8, 2013, until June 7, 2013.
- You may submit comments by the following methods:
  - Electronic Submission: The Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov> (select “Submit Comment,” then type in “NOAA-NMFS-2013-0049” in the “Keyword or ID” box). All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change.
  - Mail: NOAA Fisheries  
Southeast Regional Office  
Sustainable Fisheries Division  
c/o Kate Michie  
263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

**Where can I get more information on Regulatory Amendment 18?**

- Regulatory Amendment 18 is available online at the Council's Web site at <http://www.safmc.net>.
- The contact person for Regulatory Amendment 18 is Kate Michie of NOAA Fisheries Office of Sustainable Fisheries. She may be reached at: (727) 824-5305, or by e-mail at [Kate.Michie@noaa.gov](mailto:Kate.Michie@noaa.gov).